WHAT’S WRONG WITH WEAK NECESSITY?

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Abstract: How can claims like ‘Necessarily, Cicero is human’ be true, given that Cicero is a mere contingent existent? The Kripkean solution to this puzzle is to read the necessity involved weakly – i.e., as claiming that, whenever Cicero exists, he is human. However, Kripke is unhelpfully cryptic about how exactly we are to understand weak necessity, a point that is especially problematic since the most straightforward way of doing so leads to significant problems. As such, here I explicate a proper account of weak necessity, and, in so doing, demonstrate how these problems can be dismissed. The upshot is that, properly understood, weak necessity not only solves the initial puzzle, but, more broadly, helps serve as a foundation for a general Kripkean approach to modal metaphysics.

Three widely-held assumptions about the interplay between existence, necessity, and property possession are:

- **Contingentism** Some objects (e.g. Cicero) contingently exist
- **Being Constraint** Some properties (e.g. being human) are existence entailing, where a property $F$ is existence entailing $\text{iff}_{\text{df}}$ necessarily, if an object $x$ possesses $F$ at world $w$, then $x$ exists at $w$.
- **Nec-Truths** Some necessity claims involving contingent existents are true

Given this trio, a puzzle immediately emerges: how can any necessity claims involving contingent existents be true, given their contingent existence? For example, the following is generally thought to be true:

(1) Necessarily, Cicero is human

At first glance, however, (1) is a necessitated atomic sentence whose truth requires that ‘Cicero is human’ be true at every possible world. But, as Cicero is a contingent existent, there are worlds where Cicero fails to be, let alone be human, meaning ‘Cicero is human’ isn’t true at every world.

A similar problem emerges for:

(2) Cicero is necessarily human

**Prima facie,** (2)’s truth requires Cicero to be human in every world. And, as with (1), this seems to conflict with Cicero’s contingent existence – again, how can Cicero be human in worlds where he fails to be?²

One quick response is reject **Contingentism,** thereby embracing the idea that all objects necessarily exist. Then, since he doesn’t contingently exist, there are no worlds where Cicero fails to be and thus no reason to think there are worlds where he fails to be human.³ A similar move is to reject **Being Constraint.** This allows Cicero to be human at every world, even the ones where he’s non-existent, which circumvents the problem.⁴ Meanwhile, a third ‘solution’ is to give up **Nec-Truths** and say that claims like (1) and (2) are simply false. And while these responses avoid the problem, they’re all extremely counter-intuitive: it really does seem that Cicero’s a mere contingent existent, the idea that something could be human at a world without existing there strains credulity (as Williamson (2013: 148) puts it, ‘How could a thing be propertied were there no such thing to be propertied?’), and, since the near universal rejection of Quinean scepticism about modality, most metaphysicians really do think that
claims like (1) and (2) are true. So, a solution to the puzzle that doesn’t abandon these assumptions would be preferable.

Enter Kripke. In what is the standard solution to the puzzle, Kripke suggests that we interpret (1) and (2)’s necessity weakly, where we count a statement as weakly necessary iff ‘whenever the objects mentioned therein exist, the statement would be true’ (1971: 137). Accordingly, (1) and (2) should be understood not as necessitated atomic sentences, but rather as necessitated existence conditionals of the form:

(3) Necessarily, if Cicero exists, then Cicero is human

Conveniently, (3)’s truth doesn’t require that Cicero necessarily exist: the conditional is trivially true in Cicero-less worlds. So, if we read (1) and (2) as somehow equivalent to (3), they both come out as true despite Cicero’s contingent existence.

The idea of understanding necessity claims involving contingent existents in terms of necessitated existence conditionals is Kripke’s weak necessity strategy, and is a Lynch-pin in Kripke’s overall modal metaphysics; in particular, as well as using it to solve the puzzle, his argument for the necessity of identity relies upon it (without weak necessity, identity statements involving a contingent existent wouldn’t turn out necessary). Similarly, it serves as the basis for Kripke’s modalist account of essence, allowing analyses of ‘essential’ predications (like (2)) in terms of necessitated existential conditionals. Finally, this solution to the puzzle offers several significant ‘theoretical benefits’, in that it stands in ‘easy harmony with standard modal logic and possible worlds semantics’ (McLeod 2008: 327), as developed in e.g. Kripke (1963). So it’s fair to say that lots of things near and dear to the Kripkean depend upon weak necessity, and that it’s a fairly useful notion of have around.

For all this, a major question remains: what exactly does it mean to say that (1) and (2) should be ‘interpreted in terms of’ or are ‘somehow equivalent’ to (3)? Unfortunately, Kripke leaves us in the dark here. And that’s bad because, without more information, we can’t be sure what exactly we’re getting ourselves into by embracing weak necessity, which threatens to throw us right back into the puzzle (and potentially leaves the whole Kripkean edifice resting on sand).

§1. The (problematic) Equivalence Interpretation

So, what is the relationship between (1), (2), and (3)? The most straightforward account, advanced by Wiggins (1976), Davies (1981), and, more recently, McLeod (2008), is to interpret Kripke as suggesting that claims like (1) and (2) are always logically equivalent to claims like (3). This equivalence interpretation clearly explains what it means to ‘interpret’ (1) and (2) in terms of (3): they all share the same underlying truth-conditions, most explicitly stated in (3). As such, if one is true, the other two are as well.

This interpretation commits us to a trio of schemata:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{DNS} & \quad \text{Necessarily, } a \text{ is } F \text{ iff necessarily, if } a \text{ exists, then } a \text{ is } F \\
\text{RNS} & \quad a \text{ is necessarily } F \text{ iff necessarily, if } a \text{ exists, then } a \text{ is } F \\
\text{NES} & \quad a \text{ is necessarily } F \text{ iff necessarily, } a \text{ is } F
\end{align*}
\]

The first captures the connection between claims like (1) and (3), the second between (2) and (3), and the third follows from transitivity. Together, these make it clear that all natural language expressions of necessity have a single truth condition – namely, that of a necessitated existence conditional.
However, as Wiggins (1976: 301) objects, this interpretation of weak necessity leads to ‘counter-intuitive results’ when applied to modal claims involving existence. Specifically, there is an intuitive difference in truth-value between

(4) Necessarily, 7 exists
(5) Necessarily, Cicero exists

where the former is taken to be true, the latter false. However, given DNS, these are respectively equivalent to

(4*) Necessarily, if 7 exists, then 7 exists
(5*) Necessarily, if Cicero exists, then Cicero exists

both of which are trivially true. Thus, given DNS, no provision is made for the intuitive difference in truth-value between (4) and (5), meaning that the weak necessity strategy fails to accurately state the truth conditions of all claims of the form, ‘Necessarily, a is F’.

A similar problem emerges for RNS, as pointed out by McLeod (2008). For plugging in existence turns RNS’s right-hand side into a triviality:

(6) Necessarily, if a exists, then a exists

And, as everything satisfies a triviality, this means the following also holds:

(7) Necessarily, if Cicero exists, then Cicero exists

But, given RNS, (7)’s truth entails the truth of

(8) Cicero necessarily exists

which contradicts Cicero’s contingent existence, since there’s nothing more to being a contingent existent than not necessarily existing. As such, if Cicero is a contingent existent, (8) must be false. Yet given RNS, (8) is true. Avoiding this contradiction requires either giving up RNS (and thus also the weak necessity strategy) or the assumption that Cicero is a contingent existent, which is one of the initial assumptions the weak necessity strategy was designed to protect! It therefore seems that weak necessity fails again, in that it does not adequately track the proper truth conditions for all claims of the form ‘a is necessarily F’.

One could take these existence problems as evidence that weak necessity fails ‘to reconcile the convictions it was originally invoked to try and reconcile’ (McLeod 2008: 327) – namely, the initial trio of assumptions – and that, as a consequence, an alternative solution to the puzzle must be found. Assuming the equivalence interpretation, this seems very hard to disagree.

However, given the plausibility of the initial assumptions, plus the extreme utility (and centrality) that weak necessity offers Kripkeans, we’ve reasons to not abandon ship entirely, if something is salvageable. And, thankfully, there is – provided we get clear on a few matters.

§2. A Bifurcation Interpretation

To be clear, the source of both problems is that DNS and RNS force just one reading of, respectively, (1) and (2). But both DNS and RNS were hoisted upon the Kripkean due to the equivalence interpretation. So, if an alternative interpretation that didn’t invoke DNS and RNS but still explicated the connection between (1), (2), and (3), then the problems could be
avoided, the puzzle solved, and the weak necessity strategy retained. Yet what would such an alternative look like?

Here’s a start: let’s begin with the thought that ‘necessarily’ in natural language has two readings, diverging in truth-conditions depending upon whether the necessity involved is taken to be strong or weak.\(^\text{11}\) Take the following pair:

\[
\begin{align*}
(1) & \quad \text{Necessarily, Cicero is human} \\
(9) & \quad \text{Necessarily, 9 is odd}
\end{align*}
\]

Shifting to possible worlds talk simply for clarity, stipulate that, read strongly, these are respectively equivalent to

\[
\begin{align*}
(1S) & \quad \text{For every possible world } w, \text{ Cicero is human in } w \\
(9S) & \quad \text{For every possible world } w, \text{ 9 is odd in } w
\end{align*}
\]

Meanwhile, read weakly, to

\[
\begin{align*}
(1W) & \quad \text{For every possible world } w, \text{ if Cicero exists in } w, \text{ then Cicero is human in } w \\
(9W) & \quad \text{For every possible world } w, \text{ if 9 exists in } w, \text{ then 9 is odd in } w
\end{align*}
\]

The upshot is that there is a difference in the truth conditions for (1) and (9) depending upon whether you read them weakly or strongly; for example, read weakly, (1) is true – Cicero is human in every world in which he exists – but false read strongly – given his contingent existence, there are worlds where Cicero fails to exist and so isn’t human. Meanwhile, since 9 is both odd in every world in which it exists and, given standard assumptions, odd in every world, (9) is true regardless of how it is read.

Similarly, on this bifurcatory account, claims like (2) can be read as either:

\[
\begin{align*}
(2W) & \quad \text{Cicero is necessarily weak human} \\
(2S) & \quad \text{Cicero is necessarily strong human}
\end{align*}
\]

We can stipulate that these are respectively equivalent to:

\[
\begin{align*}
(2W) & \quad \text{For every possible world } w, \text{ if Cicero exists in } w, \text{ then Cicero is human in } w \\
(2S) & \quad \text{For every possible world } w, \text{ Cicero is human in } w
\end{align*}
\]

Of course, as Cicero is a contingent existent, (2S) is false – unsurprising, since it’s equivalent to the false (1S).\(^\text{12}\) Alternatively, (2W) is true, despite Cicero’s contingent existence (and similarly for the identical (1W)).

What we get then is a bifurcation between two ways to read necessity ascriptions. Sticking to world-talk, we can say that the strong reading lines up with the standard reading of necessity – i.e., it represents universal quantification over all possible worlds. The weak reading, meanwhile, corresponds to a universal quantification over a proper subset – specifically, all and only those worlds where the mentioned object exists. Hence weak necessity can be understood as a kind of restricted necessity, restricted in the manner exactly as Kripke specified in the earlier quote.

Further, this understanding also permits the following extension of the notion of weak necessity beyond mere atomic sentences (as dealt with thus far) to more complex sentences:

\[
\text{Weak-Ext} \quad \text{For all sentences } P, \text{ ‘Necessarily weak } P\text{’ is true iff, in every world where all the objects mentioned in } P \text{ exist, they are as } P \text{ says they are}\]
\]

\(^{11}\)\(^{12}\)\(^{13}\)
In short, only possible worlds in which all the objects named in $P$ exist are relevant to $P$’s truth conditions. For ease, however, the remainder of the paper will continue to focus only on atomic cases like (1) and (2).

Given bifurcation, DNS and RNS are too simple-minded, mistakenly blending together distinct readings of modal claims. Suitable replacement schemata are readily available, however:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schemata</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WDNS</td>
<td>Necessarily weak $a$ is $F$ iff $a$ necessarily strong, if $a$ exists, $a$ is $F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRNS</td>
<td>$a$ is necessarily weak $F$ iff necessarily strong, if $a$ exists, $a$ is $F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNES</td>
<td>$a$ is necessarily strong $F$ iff necessarily strong, $a$ is $F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNES</td>
<td>Necessarily weak $a$ is $F$ iff $a$ is necessarily weak $F$</td>
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The first schema captures from the stipulated link between the weak reading of claims like (1) and (1W), the second from the weak reading of (2) and (2W), the third from the strong reading of (2) and (2S), and the fourth follows from transitivity.

This quartet defines and links two flavours of necessity, both of which have de re and de dicto applications. Importantly, they support the Kripkean solution to the puzzle: when it comes to claim like (1), the puzzle is solved via WDNS, as (1) is true without requiring that Cicero exist in every world if it is to read as (1W), and when it comes to claims like (2), the puzzle is solved via appeal to WRNS since (2) is true (without requiring that Cicero necessarily exist) when read as (2W). Additionally, WRNS preserves the link between de re and de dicto necessities, ensuring that Kripkeans still have a solid foundation for modalism about essence. Finally, this account doesn’t require positing a second, primitive necessity because, in the above, necessity weak is defined in terms of necessity strong – so the requisite ideological primitives are the same as for the equivalence interpretation!

But that’s not all – along with two flavours of necessity, this account also offers two flavours of possibility, defined in terms of the following four schemata:

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPDF</td>
<td>Possibly strong $P$ iff $P$ in some world, $P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPDF</td>
<td>Possibly weak $P$ iff $P$ in some world where all the objects mentioned in $P$ exist, $P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNSP</td>
<td>Necessary strong $P$ iff $\neg$ Possibly strong $\neg P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNWP</td>
<td>Necessary weak $P$ iff $\neg$ Possibly weak $\neg P$</td>
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Further, given the above definition of necessity weak in terms of necessity strong, these four entail:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WPNS</td>
<td>Possibly weak $P$ iff $\neg$ Necessary strong $\neg (If$ the things mentioned in $P$ exist, then $P)$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This again means that we can still rely upon only positing a single ideological primitive – no need to accept two distinct primitive flavours of necessity or possibility.

So, this bifurcation account looks like everything the Kripkean could want: it fits extremely well with the standard possible world semantics, is compatible with Kripke’s original comments on weak necessity, elucidates the connection between claims like (1)–(3), and supports the solution to the puzzle, all without requiring any additional metaphysical
primitives. But, as I will show in the next section, best of all is that it also avoids the earlier pair of problems concerning existence!

§3. Solomonic solutions to existence problems

The first problem was the failure to capture the intuitive difference in truth-values between:

(4) Necessarily, 7 exists
(5) Necessarily, Cicero exists

This was because, given DNS, both were equivalent to trivially true necessitated conditionals. Given the bifurcation interpretation, however, we must distinguish between two readings of (4) and (5). Read weakly, they are equivalent to:

(4W) Necessarily_{weak}, 7 exists
(5W) Necessarily_{weak}, Cicero exists

Applying WDNS, these are in turn equivalent to:

(4*) Necessarily_{strong}, if 7 exists, then 7 exists
(5*) Necessarily_{strong}, if Cicero exists, then Cicero exists

And (4) and (5)’s truth follows from (4*) and (5*) ‘as night follows day’ (Wiggins 1976: 301). So, read weakly, there’s no difference in truth-value. But read strongly, (4) and (5) are equivalent to:

(4S) Necessarily_{strong}, 7 exists
(5S) Necessarily_{strong} Cicero exists

Here, truth-values differ: (4S) is true, (5S) false – though 7 inhabits every possible world, Cicero only inhabits some.

So the Kripkean can, pace Wiggins, preserve the intuitive difference in truth-value between (4) and (5) by offering at least one (strong) reading where the two differ. The upshot is that the first problem can be dismissed, a product of a too-simplistic understanding of the interplay between weak and strong necessity!17

The second problem, meanwhile, emerged because, given RNS, there is only one reading of

(8) Cicero necessarily exists,

the truth of which was entailed by the trivial truth of

(7) Necessarily, if Cicero exists, then Cicero exists,

and, importantly, contradicted Cicero’s contingent existence. But, in light of the bifurcation contingent existence. But, in light of the bifurcation interpretation, we must disambiguate (8)’s strong and weak readings. Speaking metaphorically, there are two properties (8) might ascribe to Cicero: one is necessary_{strong} existence, i.e., existing at every possible world, while the other is necessary_{weak} existence, i.e., existing if you exist.18 But these properties are clearly distinct: first, they have different satisfaction conditions, since to possess necessary_{strong} existence you’ve got to be present in every world, but you only need to exist in some worlds to possess necessary_{weak} existence; second, they have different contraries, as the contrary to necessary_{strong} existence is being such
that there is at least one world where you fail to exist – the property we standardly call ‘contingent existence’ – while the contrary of necessary weak existence is the contradictory being such that there is at least one world where you exist at which you don’t exist; and third, the pair have different extensions, given that extremely few objects possess necessary strong existence (e.g., God, 7, and ∅, to name a few), but absolutely everything possesses necessary weak existence.

With this in mind, note that, read strongly, (8) is

\[(8S) \text{ Cicero necessarily strong exists,} \]

the truth of which is incompatible with Cicero’s being a contingent existent, since it entails that Cicero exists in every possible world. But this isn’t the case for (8)’s weak reading,

\[(8W) \text{ Cicero necessarily weak exists,} \]

the truth of which is compatible with Cicero’s contingent existence: there is, of course, nothing contradictory in existing in every world you exist in and not existing in every world.

Fortunately for the Kripkean, it’s only (8W) that follows from the (trivial) truth of (7) (by an application of WRNS). Thus no contradiction emerges: the trivial truth of (7) proves that it is trivially true that Cicero necessarily weak exists, which is perfectly compatible with his being a contingent existent. Of course, we would get a contradiction if (8W)’s truth entailed (8S)’s, but it doesn’t: a’s being necessarily weak \(F\) doesn’t entails that a is necessarily strong \(F\), as being human in every world in which you exist doesn’t entail you’re human in every world.\(^{19}\)

The upshot is that, once we are careful about the weak/strong necessity disambiguation, the second ‘problem’ dissolves, since we end up committed to the claims that Cicero both exists if he exist (which is trivial) and does not exist in every possible world (which we assumed at the outset).

§4. Conclusions

Let’s reassess. To solve the puzzle that emerged from commitment to a trio of plausible assumptions – namely, Contingentism, Being Constraint, and Nec-Truths – Kripke introduced the notion of weak necessity. Unfortunately, Kripke was rather cryptic about how we should understand weak necessity, leaving us the task of elucidating the notion as an exercise for the reader. The most straightforward way to do so – the equivalence interpretation – was seen to quickly ran afoul of problems concerning the treatment of existence. An alternative, bifurcation interpretation, which took necessity ascriptions to be ambiguous between two ‘flavours’ of necessity, was then offered. It was then shown that this bifurcation interpretation not only supports the puzzle solution, but also avoids the problems that beset the equivalence interpretation. We can thus conclude that something like this bifurcation story was what Kripke had in mind when he introduced weak necessity (or, if it wasn’t, then it’s what he should have done).\(^{20}\)

Of course, this isn’t to say that there aren’t other problems facing this Kripkean view. For example, one might object that the conjunction of Contingentism, Being Constraint, and Nec-Truths entails the failure of the rule of necessitation, and hence requires a more complex modal logic than we might have initially suspected.\(^{21}\) Similarly, one could argue this story doesn’t explain the important difference in status between (2) and (8), since Cicero’s existence, unlike his humanity, seems to be an accident of his, yet both are false when read strongly and true weakly.\(^{22}\) And such objections must be addressed, if we’re to completely adopt the Kripkean framework. However, the modest scope of this paper was to address the initial puzzle about true necessities involving contingent existents and, as I hope to have
convincing argued, this puzzle can successfully be put to bed by appeal to a (properly understood) notion of weak necessity.23

REFERENCES


1 This is similar to, though distinct from, Williamson’s (2013) principle of the same name. However, for our purposes, the differences are immaterial.
2 Fine (2005) raises a related, but slightly distinct ‘Puzzle of Possible Non-existence’, a version of which we’ll return to in §3.
3 Of course, a bit of finesse is still required to show that Cicero is in fact human in every world; see Linsky and Zalta (1996) and Williamson (2013) for more on this matter.
4 Fine (2005) gives such an account, to which Williamson (2013: 154-5) and Forbes (2008: 283-6) offer substantial and, to my mind, decisive criticism. Further, note that of course no one would deny that existence is itself existence entailing.
5 It’s worth noting that in the actual quote Kripke uses an ‘if’, rather than an ‘iff’. However, I’ll use the ‘iff’, since it seems more in line with what he intended.
6 In fact, the above quote about weak necessity emerges from a discussion of how to treat identity sentences involving contingent existents; see (Kripke 1971: 135-7).
7 Famously, Fine (1994) attacked this modalist understanding of essence; while this is not the place to defend the account, see e.g. Wildman (2013) for a rejoinder.
8 DNS is short for the ‘de dicto necessity schema’, RNS for ‘de re necessity schema’, and NES for ‘necessity equivalence schema’ (apologies to Nintendo).
9 A similar point is also made in Hazen (1976: 30) and Davies (1981: 216). Further, as McLeod (2008) correctly mentions, the following problems don’t require existence to be a property or even a first-order predicate; all that is required is that singular existentials can be meaningfully formulated, a point that the formulation of DNS and RNS already depend upon.
10 Thus, for example, Wiggins argues for a predicate modifying treatment of modal operators, which could then be used to provide new truth conditions for (2).
11 Davies (1981: 218) discusses an ambiguity thesis superficially similar to the following, but only sketches it and does not discuss how it could be used to rebut the problems concerning existence.
12 The same goes for Cicero’s possessing any necessarily strong property: contingent objects like Cicero can only possess necessarily weak properties, while necessary existents (e.g. God, 2) can – and do – possess either.
13 Davies (1981: 214) offers a similar extension.
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14 WDNS is the ‘weak de dicto necessity schema’; WRNS, the ‘weak de re necessity schema’, SNES, the ‘strong necessity equivalence schema’ (again, apologies to Nintendo); and WNES, the ‘weak necessity equivalence schema’.  

15 This holds true even for strong claims like ‘9 is necessarily odd’, which we intuitively want to be both true necessarily and essentially. The former is captured by SNES, the later by WRNS (given that a’s being necessarily F entails that a is necessarily weak F).  

16 This distinction between two types of possibility gives the Kripkean the means for resolving a related puzzle raised by Fine (2005). Specifically, relying upon the standard inter-definition of possibility and necessity, Fine argues that the following pair of claims are entirely uncontroversial, following from standard assumptions – namely, from the fact that Cicero is essentially a man and that he is a contingent existence respectfully:

(10) It is not possible that Cicero is not human  
(11) It is possible that Cicero does not exist

Unfortunately, together they appear to entail:

(12) It is possible that Cicero is human and does not exist

which is obviously false. Thankfully, the Kripkean has the resources to block the argument. That’s because the only reading of (10) that’s true is

(10W) It is not possible weak that Cicero is not human

Meanwhile, the only true reading of (11) is

(11W) It is possible strong that Cicero doesn’t exist

And no reading of (12) follows from these two, unless we equivocate on ‘possible’.  

Interestingly, to this solution, Fine objects that, ‘in accepting both premises, it is hard to have any sense that we are guilty of any such equivocation’ (2005: 334). However, as Forbes points out (2008: 286) it’s plausible that such subtle shifts of sense aren’t immediately and obviously available to introspection, and Fine’s own solution to this puzzle also relies upon a non-obvious equivocation.  

17 An irony here is that, following his objection, Wiggins suggests the best way to avoid the problem is to distinguish two readings of (1), where, ‘[t]aken de re this is an unproblematic essentialist claim. Taken de dicto it is not even true’ (1976: 303); I agree with the spirit, but not the letter: instead of distinguishing between a de re and a de dicto reading, distinguish a weak and a strong reading, where, on the former, ‘Necessarily Cicero is human’ is an unproblematic, true claim, and on the latter it’s not even true.  

18 It’s worth emphasizing again that this property talk is purely metaphorical, employed here for ease of expression.  

19 Thought the opposite entailment holds: a is necessarily strong F entails that a is necessarily weak F.  

20 In personal conversation, Kripke confirmed that something like the above bifurcation story was what he should have said about the nature of weak necessity.  

21 See Williamson (2013: Chapter 4).  

22 Thanks to [redacted] for raising this. This is in fact one of the counter-examples Fine (1994: 5) uses in his attempt to undermine modalism. And while debating this point is beyond the scope of this paper, it’s worth noting that, as Wildman (2013: 767-8) has pointed out, the force of this example is rather weak, since (a) that everything necessarily possesses necessary weak existence is a ‘banality of the highest order’, and (b) we can distinguish the special, necessary entities (e.g. God, 7) from mere contingent existents by noting their possession of necessary strong existence.  

23 [Acknowledgements removed]